

PANEL 3 PRESENTATION.

❖ **Negotiating Peaceful transitions; liberation veterans and arms struggle in Darfur.**

The challenge of child soldiers in Liberia.

First we need to know and analyse what causes wars:

Wars are caused by; struggle for power and ruling, trade routes, sources of raw materials, class divisions, search for markets, frontiers, arms and ammunitions etc.

The root causes of the Darfur conflict:

A struggle over controlling an environment that can no longer support all the people who must live on it. Casual observers from around the world will be forgiven for having reached a disjointed picture of events, and the root causes of events, in Darfur over the past two years, something which has led to similarly disjointed conclusions and unrealistic solutions.

A combination of lazy and often sensationalist media coverage and the activities of an already active anti-Sudanese campaign have sought to reduce the incredibly complex Darfur issue to one of an attempt by an Arab-dominated government in Khartoum to wipe out its black citizens in Darfur. Some who know a little better accept the fact that the Darfur rebels are the ones who started the conflict by attacking police stations, army garrisons and nomadic leaders and communities - and in so doing murdering hundreds of policemen and precipitating a break-down in law and order.

Apologists for this premeditated violence have nevertheless sought to justify that rebel murder and mayhem by echoing rebel claims of the marginalization of Darfur.

Manipulators have distorted the realities of Darfur to serve their political agenda, and in so doing deliberately tarnishing the image of Sudan in order to detract from and destabilize the historic peace agreement ending decades of civil war in southern Sudan and to call for a disastrous international military intervention in western Sudan.

The simple facts contradict much of the lacklustre media coverage of events in Darfur and point to the need for an internal solution to the conflict in western Sudan.

As can be ascertained from any reliable source on Darfur, Darfur is a region inhabited by Arabs and non-Arabs alike. They are bound by blood through centuries of intermarriage. The two rebel groups are drawn from three tribes: Zagawa, Fur and Masalit. There are more than eighty different tribes and ethnic communities in Darfur. Any solution that would reward those who carry arms in a deliberate attempt to destabilize Africa's largest country will become a recipe for a full scale war that will spill over the borders of Sudan.

Some tribes believe that the government was not able to defend them against other tribes and armed criminal gangs who have more sophisticated weapons, which led several nomadic tribes to form their own defence groups. As a result the region became an open arms market attracting arms dealers to smuggle in all kinds of weapons such as small arms, heavy and light artillery, RPG rocker launchers, and including armoured vehicles.

Conflict in Darfur is therefore sadly not unusual. The region has seen it all before, tribal conflicts, insurgency, drought, displacement and death. On this occasion the conflict has spiraled into a humanitarian disaster. Several questions must be asked. What turned this episode into a well-organized, well-armed and well-financed civil war? What led to it being labeled as the world's "worst humanitarian crisis" while the deaths in neighboring Congo reached four million over the last few years?

Similarly, the insurgency in northern Uganda has seen the deaths of tens of thousands of people, the kidnapping of tens of thousands of children and the displacement of more than 1.6 million people in northern Uganda. The focus on Darfur has been sensationalist and disproportionate.

How we can get solution to this problem:

A number of neighboring countries share Sudan's complex ethnic fabric. Countless people identify themselves along tribal lines rather than national affiliation. Ethnically-driven destabilization endangers the entire sub-Saharan region and can only but attract extremists and terrorist organizations. Any solution to the Darfur conflict should be preceded by reconciliation between different tribes in the region.

Reconciliation should include compensation, the safe return of villagers to their villages and the prosecution of perpetrators of atrocities and violence. A political solution should be inclusive and broad-based. The designation and location of rebel and government forces and positions, as outlined in signed security agreements, is a prerequisite that would enable the government to engage other armed groups and tribes in simultaneous disarmament.

❖ -The challenge of Child soldiers in Liberia.

Causes of child soldiers:

Displaced children due to natural disasters(eg earthquakes, floods,) and or artificial disasters eg wars and all sorts of arms conflicts

Orphaned children due natural death from diseases eg AIDS.

These child soldiers are difficult to incorporate back into society and education systems at their ages and by virtue of having militaristic and aggressive inhuman feelings from war experiences.

By the time the children are to be united with their families, families are non existent or family members dead.

These children in some cases become accustomed to extent of not living armed struggles or the military.

Most experts agree that without focused intervention aimed at reintegrating them into society, child soldiers--who have witnessed and participated in the worst atrocities of war in Liberia and elsewhere--have little chance of rejoining normal civilian life. "If sufficient attention isn't paid to these kids, they're prime targets for re-enrollment" into militias or mercenary armies, says Jo Becker, advocacy director of the Children's Rights Division of Human Rights Watch.

Yes, although there could always be more, says Becker. A U.N. optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child from May 2000 requires signatory governments to refrain from conscripting soldiers under 18, demobilize child combatants, provide rehabilitation and reintegration programs, and report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child every five years about their progress. So far the protocol has over 110 signatories and has been ratified by 54 nations. Groups like the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers are working to have child soldiering defined as illegal child labor, and banned.

Encouraging. The Cote d'Ivoire rebel group Movement Patriotique de Cote d'Ivoire (MPCI) and the Liberian movement Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) both announced this year that they would stop recruiting child soldiers. Late last year, the Security Council published a "name and shame" list that exposed countries and groups that still use child soldiers. Odera says the United Nations is hopeful that the list will help end the practice of recruiting children to fight wars. But Becker says much more needs to be done. "There's pressure building, but ultimately we're going to need a lot more on the ground," she says.

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Quite sizable, say experts. Children have been an integral part of both government and rebel armies in Liberia since the country's seven-year civil war in the 1990s. In the recent conflict, which began in 2000, all three main factions--the government and rebel groups Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL)--used child soldiers. Former president Charles Taylor, who stepped down from office on August 11, 2003, recruited children into his National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) movement against the government of Samuel Doe in the late 1980s. He even formed a special brigade for them in his rebel army called the Small Boys Unit.

Yes, although mostly the boys fight, often wearing wigs and dresses to confuse the enemy and ward off evil spirits. Girls are also forcibly recruited into armed groups to fight or act as cooks, porters, and domestics for the men and boys. They are often expected to offer sex on demand, and may be given as "wives" to commanders.

Many are forced to, and comply out of fear for their own lives. Some are seeking revenge against groups that killed their families, or a way to escape poverty. Many are drugged, with everything from liquor and marijuana to gun powder mixed into milk or cocaine rubbed into cuts on their faces.

Yes. Children in Liberia and neighboring Sierra Leone, where Taylor also supported armed rebel groups, have reported witnessing and participating in rapes, murders, executions, and the dismemberment and burning alive of victims. Many of them saw their loved ones killed in front of them, or were kidnapped and threatened with death if they didn't join in on the violence.

Light, modern automatic weapons, including AK-47s and M-16s, that are simple to operate and easily accessible in war-torn regions. Technological advances have made these and other weapons easy to strip, reassemble and fire, sending a steady stream of bullets with one pull of the trigger. Becker says children also serve as human mine detectors, participate in suicide missions, and act as spies, messengers, or lookouts. She says that since children are considered less valuable than adult soldiers, they are often sent on very dangerous or suicidal missions.

Many can, says Becker. "In Liberia, family tracing will be very, very important" once the conflict ends, she says. The Red Cross has set up a family reunification program that seeks to restore the child to his or her parents or extended family. But Becker admits that taking back a child who's been through hell isn't easy. "There are lots of challenges," she says, "especially if the child was with an armed group and killed people or committed atrocities. That might be hard for a family to accept." Some groups perform traditional reconciliation or forgiveness ceremonies, or ritual purification rites, to help the child readjust to normal life. Becker thinks the widely-known fact that most children were taken against their will could help families accept them back. And Wiesner, who spent two years demobilizing child soldiers in Sierra Leone, says most families want their children back—once they're disarmed.

CONFERENCE THEMES 1.4

10. Militarism and imperialist wars: The vulnerability of African states and spaces for long term cohesion for global peace and sovereignty – UGANDA/ALGERIA.

Some of the reasons African States are vulnerable to militarism and imperialistic wars are; the overstay in power by the ruling/incumbent presidents, the oppression, suppression of the masses they rule, poverty of the majority of the masses and continued grab of public property funds by the ruling for their personal gains, lack of tolerance to the opposition and those who harbour diverging views from those of the ruling. As Marx had it that "The ruling ideas are ideas of the ruling group" this dictum applies aggressively on the African continent.

Also the ruling have support of the minority in most cases and self imposing on the masses.

Also there is a tendency of the ruling (state) and the opposition having some kind of foreign "god father" –imperialist that fund and support them for economic and political purposes.

The relationship between militarism, war and capitalism has a new relevance at the beginning of the 21st century. This 'war without limits', the new political programme adopted by the Bush Administration, marks a significant change of in the militarism of US capitalism, and more than ever, the globalisation of capital and militarism appear as two aspects of imperialist domination.

Militarism, capital and technology

Rosa Luxemburg noted that "militarism has a specific function in the history of capital. It accompanies every historic phase of accumulation". Her analyses bring out what one might nowadays call the 'historicity' of the relationship of militarism to capital and they retain their pertinence today. She defines "the imperialist phase of accumulation [as] phase of the global competition of capital [which] has the entire world as theatre. Here the methods employed are colonial policy, the system of international borrowing, the policy of spheres of interest, war. Violence, cheating, pillage are openly employed, without any mask". This is contrary to the "bourgeois liberal theory [which] separates the economic domain of capital from the other aspect, that of the blows of force, considered as more or less fortuitous, of foreign policy".

Luxemburg stressed in a very contemporary manner that "political violence is also the instrument and vehicle of the economic process; the duality of the aspects of accumulation conceals the same organic phenomenon, originating in the conditions of capitalist reproduction" [stress by this author]

In his polemic against Dühring, Engels analyses the relationship between militarism and the technological development of capitalism. History shows that the conduct of wars rests on the production of weapons, which itself

depends on the state of the economy, more precisely on industrial and technological development, because "industry remains industry, whether it is applied to the production or the destruction of things". Engels notes the radical changes that took place after capitalism came to dominate the world. "The modern warship is not only a product, but at the same time a specimen of modern large-scale industry, a floating factory", For him, "militarism dominates and is swallowing Europe" and this formula would find a tragic confirmation in the war that broke out between the European imperialisms in 1914.

Weapons production is not only 'a specimen of modern large-scale industry'; since the Second World War, it has been at the heart of technological trajectories essential to the mode of production (aeronautics and space, electronics, the nuclear industry). The military expenditure of the United States, but also that of the other imperialist countries, reached extraordinarily high levels in the subsequent five decades, supposedly to meet the threat represented by the USSR. In the latter country, the gigantic sums devoted to defence consolidated the ruling caste and its parasitic existence, while also contributing to the bleeding of productive and financial resources.

The outstanding fact since the Second World War is a deep implantation of the military-industrial system in the economy and society of the US, which has in no way been weakened by the disappearance of the USSR; on the contrary it is now entering a new stage of consolidation. This strengthening of the military-industrial system rests on a conjuncture of factors: an industrial concentration and an ever closer liaison of the weapons companies with financial capital, an increase in the military budget embarked on by Clinton in 1999 and considerably amplified by Bush, and a strengthened presence in information and communication technologies (ICT). These technologies benefited from Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative ('star wars') and play a determinant role in 'information domination' and 'network centric warfare' which were the favoured themes of Pentagon strategists in the 1990s.

Military supremacy has allowed US weapons companies to conquer a central position in the development of ICT, dominated in the 1990s by the civil companies (the so-called 'new economy' and its associated start-ups).

The weapons companies must also develop new weapons systems for ground forces. The preparation of 'urban wars' (the expression employed by the Pentagon experts) waged by soldiers equipped armed with hyper-sophisticated weapons, occupies an important place in the military budgets. The aim is to wage war against the populations of the immense agglomerations in the countries of the South (those of South America obsess US strategists), and eventually against the 'dangerous classes' of the cities of the North. One can then envisage that the major influence the weapons groups have acquired inside the federal and state institutions since the second world war, together with the broadening of the 'national security agenda' to non-military objectives which increasingly concern aspects of social and private life, will accelerate the formation of a 'military-security system'. This latter will, in the coming years, play a much more important role than that of the 'military-industrial complex' during the Cold War.

The formation of this military-security system gives the US state a considerable power.

Imperialism in the 21st century

We are far from the decline of the 'state form' of the domination of capital, which, according to Hardt and Negri, would give way to an 'Empire' inside of which capital and labour would confront each other without mediation. [5] To maintain its domination, capital cannot do without a political apparatus, institutions (judiciary, military and so on) which have been constituted, strengthened and streamlined for two centuries in the framework of the states of the dominant capitalist countries. 'world capitalism', in the sense spoken of by these authors, does not exist. Capital, as a social relationship, certainly has a propensity to transcend national frontiers and other barriers (forms of socio-political organization for example). The 'world market is contained in the very notion of capital' as Marx said, but it is a process marked by contradictions which are expressed in inter-capitalist and inter-imperialist rivalries as well as in crises. That is why the global extension of capital has always taken and will continue to take on a physiognomy inextricably linked to the inter-state relationship of forces and its associated violence.

The domination of the US over the other imperialist countries is obvious. That is one reason why the breakout of inter-imperialist wars like those that took place in the 20th century is improbable. The integration of transatlantic capital,

between the US and a part of the European Union, continues, and has constituted one of the distinctive features of 'globalization' in the late 20th century. The dominant classes of the US and the EU are, to a certain extent, in the situation that Marx described in relation to the competition between capitalists: "while there is little love lost between them in competition among themselves", they "form a veritable freemason society vis-à-vis the whole working-class" and, need we add, vis-à-vis the peoples of the countries subjected to their domination.

Globalization of capital and militarism

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The opposition: Los Angeles

The improbability of wars between the dominant capitalist powers does not render obsolete the relation between war and imperialism established by Marxism at the beginning of the 20th century. It is enough to think of what would happen if the capitalist transformation of China under the control of the bureaucracy of the Chinese CP came to threaten the US on the economic terrain. The ultra-imperialism that would allow capital to overcome its contradictions, as imagined by Kautsky, is surely not on the agenda. War maintains and expands its role in the current phase of the globalization of capital.

The globalization of capital does not involve an expansion of capitalism defined as an enlargement of the reproduction of value on a planetary scale. It leads rather to a growth of predatory operations on the part of capital, whose 'property rights' (over financial assets) allow it to collect financial incomes as well as to appropriate the processes of life itself. "There are not too many necessities of life produced, in proportion to the existing population. Quite the reverse. Too little is produced to decently and humanely satisfy the wants of the great mass."

It is this contradiction that the globalization of capital has carried to an unequalled level, crushing most of the countries of Africa and, in the course of the 1990s, plunging the 'emergent countries' of Asia and Latin America into crisis. The state has always played a major role in this process of expropriation of the producers by capital, not only in the so-called phase of 'primitive accumulation' but also during the colonial conquests whose objective was to submit the peoples and territories of the planet to the domination of capital.

The violence of the state is more than ever necessary today, in polar opposition to the mystifications that associate the 'markets' and free trade with peace and democracy. The globalization of capital is accompanied by a process of commodification that could be defined as the extension of the area where capital can exercise its property rights. Such is indeed the prior condition to the existence of 'markets', whose objective and effect are, on the one hand, to increase the dependence of the producers while rendering them more 'free', that is more constrained to work for capital, and on the other hand, to enslave new social groups, in particular in the dominated countries. These areas are not only geographical territories, but also new areas of private appropriation, like the biosphere (permits for the right to pollute), the life process (patents on seeds and so on) and increasingly rights of intellectual property whose incessant extension represents a serious threat to human liberty. All these objectives cannot be attained without the use of violence.

The US is at the centre of the globalization of capital. The strengthening of militarism observed in the 1990s is not an additional extra tacked on to an otherwise healthy economic functioning. The globalization of capital and militarism are two aspects of the "same organic phenomenon" as Rosa Luxemburg put it, and it is in the US that they are at their most interdependent. Political-military power was a determinant in the process that allowed the US to attract influxes of money capital seeking high 'security' in the 1990s, with an accelerated tempo after the Asian economic crisis of 1997.

Finally, the US economy was hit by recession in 2000. It is not possible to analyze here the mechanisms, but the important thing to understand is that if the US is at the heart of the globalization of capital, it is also at the heart of its contradictions, much deeper than can be measured by the indicators used to characterize a recession. The rapid development of these contradictions has given the lie to those who thought that the US constituted an 'island of prosperity' in the ocean of global devastation produced by the domination of financial capital (the 'new economy').

The economic contradictions have been amplified and not reduced by the implementation of the budget programmes decided on after September 11, 2001, for which the term 'class war' has been used.

In this context, the 'war without limits' the Bush Administration has committed itself to is in relation with the trajectory of capitalism over the past 20 years. This policy expresses the interests of a financial oligarchy, whose material bases rest on the pillage of natural resources (with oil, of course, in the first rank) and on the endless payment of the debt, even if endangers and threatens the very existence of the most vulnerable social classes and peoples. The control that the US and the other dominant countries of the 'international community' are in the process of exerting ^¾ through forms of direct management, mandate or protectorate ^¾ has, still less than the colonial conquests of imperialism at the beginning of the 20th century, the pretension and the possibility of stimulating the economic development of the dominated countries. As shown by the tragic example of the African continent over the last 20 years, what is on the agenda now is the dismembering of the states of the 'South', which cannot resist the consequences of imperialist domination.

The social classes whose existence rests on a mode of social domination which privileges to this point the appropriation of the value created by the producers and encourages still more predation, can only have very short term concerns, without regard for the catastrophic social and environmental consequences for humanity. They need governments and state institutions that assure them the full enjoyment and security of their property rights. The more financial capital succeeds in extending its logic, the more the need for armed force grows.

In order to achieve everlasting/long term global peace and sovereignty, there is a need of individuals, groups, parties and organizations of the revolutionary left to carry out massive education so as to give the population a social, economic and political understanding of the world we live in and how we can change it.

To have an objective analysis of causes of war (why is that before any war is started, many lies are told - truth being the first casualty of any war).

Wars are fought in the interest of the capitalists who are the minority, the exploiters, (those who earn without working unlike us the working class who work without earning.) and not the poor, the working class or even the foot soldiers.

We can resolve our misunderstandings by discussions rather than banging each other's heads.

Africa gives the best conditions as a breeding the best revolutionary leftists given its history, social, economic and political prevailing conditions that can be enhanced and supported by already existing revolutionary leftists on the continent and abroad.

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